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ABSTRACT

The Library of Congress and the New York Public Library have recently undertaken sponsorship of a new project to microfilm official national gazettes from nations throughout the world. The New York Public Library had conducted such a program from 1956 through 1971, but had discontinued the service due to lack of financial support. With coordination and participation from the Library of Congress, the new project expects to microfilm some 175 national gazettes on a continuing basis. Tentatively, the Library of Congress is planning to microfilm national gazettes from Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and northern Africa; the New York Public Library is microfilming titles from Europe, the British Commonwealth, and southern Africa. To avoid duplication of effort, information is needed on microfilming efforts of national governments, national libraries, and commercial micropublishers outside the United States. (Author/PF)

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The new Library of Congress/New York Public Library microfilming project for official gazettes

by

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The Library of Congress and the New York Public Library have recently undertaken sponsorship of a new project to microfilm official national gazettes from nations throughout the world. The purpose of this brief report is to describe the project and, I hope, enlist your support for what we think is a bibliographic and preservation effort of considerable international importance.

Official gazettes have long been recognized as documents of fundamental research significance for government officials, scholars, and librarians. Moreover, gazettes are prime candidates for microfilming: they are printed on perishable newsprint that accumulates in great bulk, they are infrequently used, and they are collected in depth by only a few research institutions. Unfortunately, an earlier effort of the American research community to organize an effective gazette microfilming program met with only limited success.

In 1956, at the urging of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials and the Association of Research Libraries, the New York Public Library undertook a microfilming project for current official gazettes. Between 1956 and about 1969, the New York Public Library acquired and microfilmed current issues of most official gazettes issued throughout the world on a more or less

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current basis, even though little was accomplished in preserving retrospective files. The official gazettes program at the New York Public Library was instituted with the hope that microfilming costs, at least, would become largely self-sustaining through the purchase of positive copies by other libraries and research institutions. That hope was never realized to any substantial degree, despite cooperative marketing arrangements with commercial micropublishers. By 1969 the severe financial strain affecting the processing and reference functions of The Research Libraries of the New York Public Libraries forced a deemphasis on the gazette microfilming program and, in 1971, the program ended.[1]

The cessation of the New York Public Library gazette microfilming program was a regrettable occurrence for research libraries everywhere. Since then, a renewed gazette microfilming program has been the goal of the Foreign Gazette Microfilm Committee (Ad Hoc) of the American Library Association's Resources and Technical Services Division. The Association of Research Libraries has continued its interest in gazette microfilming, and in November 1975 the responsibilities of its Standing Committee on Foreign Newspapers on Microfilm were expanded to include foreign gazettes.

In discussing reasons for past failures in gazette microfilming, several conclusions were reached. First of all, because of the limited market, it was obvious that gazette microfilming was not a lucrative field for commercial micropublishers. Therefore, in order

for a gazette filming program to succeed, it had to be subsidized by major research institutions. Second, any gazette filming program had to be centrally coordinated and information about the program had to be widely and regularly available. Finally, a viable, long-range gazette microfilming program needed a solid bibliographic base, in particular a union list of original and microfilm gazette holdings in American research libraries.

About a year ago, the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library agreed to undertake a new foreign gazette microfilming program.[2] It was felt that sponsorship of such a project was, in effect, a national responsibility, particularly in view of the extensive gazette collections, acquisitions, and microfilming resources of the two institutions. It was agreed that preparation costs would be absorbed by each library and that an informal union list of gazette holdings would be started. Overall coordination and publicity is the responsibility of the office of the Coordinator, Foreign Newspaper Microfilming, in the Reference Department of the Library of Congress. Its publication, Foreign Newspaper Report, was expanded in 1974 and became Foreign Newspaper and Gazette Report. It is published three times a year and is available to libraries and institutions free of charge. Requests should be sent to: Library of Congress, Central Services Division, Washington, D.C. 20540.

The new Library of Congress/New York Public Library gazette project will continue the microfilming of most of the national

gazettes formerly microfilmed as part of the earlier New York Public Library program. While microfilming of retrospective issues of individual titles, e.g. pre-1956, is considered within the project's scope, initial emphasis is on the resumption of microfilming of current national gazettes. It now appears that approximately 175 national gazettes eventually will be microfilmed on a continuing basis. The last 1974 issue of Foreign Newspaper and Gazette Report, to be published in early December, announces the availability of almost 80 of these titles.

Tentatively, the Library of Congress is planning to microfilm national gazettes from Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, and northern Africa; the New York Public Library is microfilming titles from Europe, the British Commonwealth (except for countries covered by Library of Congress Public Law 480 activities), and Africa south of the Sahara. Every reasonable effort is being made to obtain missing issues before microfilming. Interested libraries are able to purchase positive microfilm from the institution doing the filming.

The goal of the joint Library of Congress/New York Public Library microfilming project is to make official national gazettes from nations throughout the world available on a reasonably current basis and at a reasonable cost. However, we do not feel that all the microfilming necessarily has to be done by the Library of Congress or the New York Public Library; in fact, we are anxious to avoid

duplication of microfilming effort. If agencies of other governments or commercial micropublishers are successfully producing achival quality microfilm of current gazettes, we will defer to them and adjust our microfilming list accordingly. There are several national gazette titles now in this category and the number will probably increase. In the meantime, we need help in learning about gazette microfilming efforts around the world. For this reason it would be appreciated if libraries, government agencies, and commercial micropublishers now microfilming or contemplating microfilming any official gazette contact the Coordinator, Foreign Newspaper Microfilming, at the Library of Congress. In particular, information is needed about gazette microfilming efforts of national governments, national libraries, and commercial micropublishers outside of the United States.

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[1] See James W. Henderson, "The Acquisition and Preservation of Foreign Official Gazettes," Farmington Plan Newsletter, no. 31, May 1970, p. 1-4.

[2] For a detailed description of the program see U.S. Library of Congress, Foreign Newspaper and Gazette Report, no. 1, 1974, p. 2-3, 6-9.